

Developing and Implementing a Smoke-Free/Tobacco-Free Worksite

Assess the Current Situation

The first step is to assess the current situation so you know where you are. Review your company's current policies, practices, and employee attitudes in regard to smoking policies. Ask the following questions:

- What are the restrictions on smoking, if any?
- Who does the policy apply to?
- When was the policy established, and why?
- What are the employees' attitudes about the current policy?
- Do people comply with the policy?
- Who is satisfied or dissatisfied? Why?

Develop the Policy

The County/City or Town Management can access policy options with model language in this Toolkit under the Policy Section.

Communicate with Employees and Management

Communication and compliance are closely related. The more time and effort spent on frequently communicating the policy in multiple ways and locations, the easier it will be to enforce the policy. Factors that facilitate compliance include:

- Staff involvement during policy development and implementation;
- Good signage and communication, both pre and post-implementation;
- Leadership and support shown by management and supervisors;
- Patience, perseverance, and consistency as the workforce/clients/visitors adapt to the change; and
- Recognition of staff members who assist with compliance.

Once the County/City/Town Government leaders decide on the new smoking policy, there's an important need to inform all employees about the upcoming changes. Remember to consider the need to involve and communicate with all local government management.

- Announce a timeline for implementing the smoking policy and cessation activities. The announcement should be made significantly in advance of the policy's effective date (**3-6 months**) to allow smokers to prepare for changes and to permit any facility or material changes that might be necessary (such as removal of ashtrays, installation of signs). It is recommended that smoking cessation support be offered at the same time as the advance announcement of the pending policy change as well as before and after the effective date. Research shows that smoke free restrictions encourage smokers to think about quitting smoking.
- Announce the policy and cessation support by using your standard communication channels (examples include websites, letters to employees and their families, paycheck stuffers, posters, and notices in employee newsletters). It is important to demonstrate that management fully supports the policy (e.g., the announcement should come from the County/City/Town Manager or the Chair of the County Commissioners or Mayor).

It is important that all employees understand the policy changes and the implications of these changes. Local Government managers or supervisors need to understand their responsibilities for implementing and enforcing the policies. The County/City/Town Manager may want to hold meetings to familiarize them

with their roles. These meetings can be useful in anticipating and preparing for potential problems, such as the abuse of break time or tension between smokers and nonsmokers. Offer to answer employee questions and invite comment about the smoking policy and cessation activities

Leading up to the effective date of the policy, the County/City/Town should have:

- Signs in place, and
- Smoking cessation and smoker support ready.

Examples of pre and post-implementation signage are available, including: “count down” signs, banners and sandwich-boards to alert the public, parking lot signage for light poles, window decals, and on-screen displays for agencies that have closed circuit television.

Announce and Manage the Policy

The County/City/Town is now ready to formally announce the policy to all their respective employees and the public and prepare for implementation. Suggested actions include the following:

- Email or other notice to all employees,
- Posting of signs about the upcoming policy,
- “Count-down” sign or banner showing how many days until the policy goes into effect, and
- News release or news conference to inform the public.

Possible Issues and Sample Responses

1. Will there be a reduction in health care costs at the end of year one?

Clarify the difficulties in promising savings in health care costs within one year. If you accurately identify who is smoking before the new policy takes effect, a careful assessment of the changes in smoking among employees at the end of year one can calculate the cost benefit of the smoke free policy.

2. Does secondhand smoke really have any adverse health effects on nonsmokers?

Inform employees about the known health effects of secondhand smoke by using the scientifically referenced information in this Educational Toolkit under Health Effects. You may want to seek the support of your local health director, or another public health or community health professional.

3. Should employees be allowed to take time away from their jobs to participate in smoking cessation activities?

You can plan smoking cessation programs at times that are not part of the work day but are convenient for employees (e.g., before work, during lunch, or after work). Encourage use of the 1-800-QUIT NOW cessation support service available to all citizens in NC who want to quit using tobacco products.

4. Will a smoke free policy result in the loss of smoking employees?

Very few employees leave their jobs because of implementation of smoke free policies: 3% of an extensive small business sample and 2% of another sample said employees left due to a smoke free policy.

5. Will a smoke free policy be too difficult to enforce?

Enforcement procedures are almost never needed, because most policies are self-enforcing and compliance is very high. Compliance is high because both management and employees communicate the policy well and support the smoke free policy.

6. Will a smoke free policy alienate visitors?

In most all cases, clearly posted signs are enough to alert visitors about the smoke free policy. Some local government agencies that have a lot of the public in the building may decide to hand out a small card explaining the smoke free policy.

7. Won't a smoke free policy cost too much time and money to implement?

Experience and survey data have clearly demonstrated that developing and implementing a smoke free policy is not expensive or time consuming. Costs and time can be saved with a designed implementation. Clear communication is the key element.

8. Implementing the Policy

The implementation of this policy will cause stress and anxiety for some of your employees, clients, and visitors. However,

- Everyone benefits from a workplace that is free of tobacco smoke and the harmful effects caused by exposure.
- Most people understand the need for the policy and will support it.
- Many employees will reduce their use of tobacco, and some will successfully quit as a result of the policy.
- In North Carolina it is becoming the norm that people do not use tobacco while in county or municipal buildings.
- Any initial challenges that arise due to this policy will lessen with time.

Public Education/Posting Signs

To assist in enforcement, all county/city town employees and the public needs to be informed. The local government should engage in a continuing program to explain and clarify the purposes and requirements of the policy to the employees and citizens affected by it. Every county/city or town building established as non-smoking under the policy should post a conspicuous sign stating the non-smoking status. The international "No Smoking" symbol consisting of a pictorial representation of a cigarette enclosed in a circle with a bar across it is considered acceptable.

Timeline for Implementation

See Sample Timeline section in toolkit or consult with Tobacco Prevention and Control Branch staff for assistance.

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